

NINO PIZZINO'S CHRISTMAS BY PAUL P. HARRIS

ST. PETER'S chimed rang out cheerily; that is, cheerily to them who had reason for cheer. The mayor's son awoke, stretched his arms and gave himself up to happy reverie. The housekeeper's helper rubbed harder on the polished brass and, smiling, repeated to herself the butler's terms of endearment of the night before; but to Nino Pizzino, lame and decrepit, lying on a rag-tag mattress in the half basement of a rickety tenement house which at eventide stood within the shadows of the huge dome and so near that, had a western blast wrenched the sky-scraping spire from its foundation the ancient ramshackle would have gone to splinters; to Nino they were alarm bells, harsh, discordant. The sound smote upon his ear drums till his head ached and they seemed to say: "The jail doors are open to thee, Nino, walk thou in, walk thou in," and his knees shook till his baggy trousers seemed possessed as he thought of the grim court and the pitiless jury and seemed to hear the words: "Ten years at hard labor."

He dropped his piccolo and, staggering up the stairs of his half basement, stumbled into the neighboring saloon for a drink, but Agnese knew him of old and she said: "Yes, you get another drink, Nino, when I have seen the color of your coin and when this account is wiped out, not before. Its great doings that you, you who by petty stealing with other fingers have accumulated more money than any other Italian in the city, should be around screaming like mad for a drink and begging from honest people. Do you think your treasure any the safer because you say you

me tell you this: I won't stand for it. We lost last night, but we won't lose every time. It's a house on the South side to-night and the mayor, the mayor whose frown makes the rich tremble and whose order to the police is: 'Shoot all robbers down, shoot them down; put a stop to this carnival of crime!' ha, ha—he who with his followers rob the rich and rob the poor for vain glory—raises his hands in holy horror when we take from the lap of plenty that which is necessary to life; the mayor has his turn Christmas eve. Well, he may be at the wrong end of the gun that shoots the robbers down, who knows? After this 'touch' is over, I, too, can afford to be respectable and to cry: 'Shoot them down, shoot them down!' Say, there, Old Piccolo, you may lie there and blubber as long as you please, but excuse me if I don't stay to listen to your music."

The house of a fabulously wealthy brewer on the South side was looted from basement to garret that night, and the city editors put scarce heads above the next morning's story of the daring robbery and the editorials chided the police and made political capital of the matter as best they could in the same old way. The safety deposit vaults did a land office business and timorous men examined their windows at night with renewed care, while nervous females looked through their closets and under their beds before retiring. The chief of police adjured his force to extra watchfulness and received volumes of gratuitous advice as to how the matter ought to be seen to, and for a few days that followed, while a repetition of the crime might



"A LA SALUTE, A LA SALUTE!"

haven't money? Oh, they know you and your game, Sly Fox. A detective from the 'Central' was in here last night, only last night, and he said that there is to be a round up; you'll be with them, I promise you; that. Battista himself is against you and he'll turn states' evidence the moment he's copped. I have that from some one who knows. So you've graduated from the school of petty thieving and launched right out a regular bad one and are looking for big game? Well, you'll get it soon enough, but I fancy that you won't find it to your liking, because such things in this country generally end with a short turn. You can't make your toes touch the ground and they say that the rope chokes, something fearful. Battista was seen Tuesday, a week ago, with the 'gang.' It was the following night that the bank at La Cede was touched. The 'gang' think that they can't do a thing without Battista these days. He has a fashion of getting into things. Well, there's everything in breeding. It has been said that your fingers are wonderfully nimble. Nino, and that there never was your like for devising and—

"But I didn't, I haven't," almost shrieked Nino, "and if the officers take me, as I have often enough heard they intend doing, they will take an innocent man, and as for Battista, of course I know he—"

The musician looked down at his ragged trousers and his gaping shoes, and he thought of Battista, the boy who had been placed in his charge before they left God's own blue-skyed Torino, and he thought of the starving, shivering life of the wayward lad on this side of the sea.

"Well, what about Battista?" asked Agnese. "He's not guilty, either," answered Nino, as he walked out into the frosty morning air. The bells had ceased their ear-splitting noise and Nino returned home.

least have been expected, the force of officers in citizens' clothing was doubled; then the excitement subsided and lynx-eyed wrongdoers reckoned that the time was ripe again.

In the meanwhile Battista had been stricken with the fever and lay in the hospital sick near unto death, and the powers that were in the criminal world mourned the loss of his master hand. Christmas eve it would be needed.

Nino made daily visits to the hospital, though the walk was a long one and he shivered in his scanty clothing. He had just returned from one of these trips one morning, and was sitting in his basement window trying to warm in a fleeting ray of sunshine when the strident tones from St. Peter's began: "The jail doors are open to thee, Nino, walk thou in, walk thou in," and he clasped his hands to his ears to shut out the sound, but it wouldn't out, and, in despair, he cried aloud: "The doors, the doors, close the doors," and then, as if in answer to his own, came the thought, why not close the doors? He could do so. He had but to tell the police of the Christmas eye plot. Battista was out of the way now; no harm could come to him, and Nino felt very kindly towards the mayor, anyhow. Had he not, once upon a time, half-soled his honor's shoes? and had he not felt almost a part of the municipal government ever since?

And so it happened that the police made the coup of their lives that night. Four men, all old-timers, were taken red-handed, and when Nino arose on that Christmas morning he was told that his name was on the city pay roll. He breakfasted high at Tony Carbonato's, and the many merry-makers, already assembled, arose to a man when Nino entered, and raising their glasses they cried: "A la salute, a la salute!" St. Peter's chimed rang again and again, and they rang as they had never rung before. Plainly they said: "The jail doors are closed at last, Nino; fear thou no more, fear thou no more." He bowed his head reverently and softly murmured his thankful praises: "Benedetto, benedetto. Amen."

Celebrated Orchids.

Baron Hrubý's celebrated collection of orchids at Petchkai, in Bohemia, has been purchased for the imperial gardens at Schonbrunn. It consists of 984 varieties and subvarieties, there being altogether more than 2,000 plants, of which several are either unique or very rare. Schonbrunn now possesses 20,000 orchids, including the rarest specimens.

WEDDING AT AN ARMY POST.

How a Young Lieutenant and His Bride Were Wedded on New Year's Day at an Arizona Fort.

In an article in "Woman's Home Companion," entitled "Holiday Week at an Army Post," Harriet A. Lusk describes as follows a military wedding performed at an isolated post in Arizona:

"Such unexpected things happen in military life! We nearly lost our breath when in the midst of our gayety an order came for Mr. Knox to go to the Philippines. He and Miss Porter were to be married next June, and he insisted upon leaving her a bride instead of a fiancée, hoping she might join him if not soon recalled."

"Only a few in the garrison had known that the order to our senior lieutenant was not wholly unexpected. The colonel's family had guarded well the secret. * * * The ceremony, with all its features, was so picturesque and so unlike those we have seen in civilian life. On the afternoon of New Year's day blue-coated soldiery walked with formal tread up and down the walk which led from the colonel's quarters to the chapel. At the former place a national flag almost hid the little veranda, which was transformed into a bower of flowers and foliage, for the day was warm and dry, as if nature, too, smiled upon the occasion. Soft rugs carpeted the walk to the gate, and there the bridal party formed after the guests had been received. A tiny girl and boy tastefully gowned formed a fair advance-guard for the party, and scattered flowers on the way from the Southwest home to the chapel. The stage was a mass of ferns, and in the center was a small silk American flag. Here and there on the walls of the chapel were military ensigns and guidons in beautiful colors, and a portiere of flags hid the balcony, behind which a string quartet struck sweet strains."

"The ceremony was performed in front of the stage, and the solemn words of the ritual were spoken to the strains of the hidden music. Through the ribboned aisle the bridal procession retreated and marched to the colonel's home. The regimental band played in welcome, and squads of soldiers stood in attention about the lawn, while Mr. and Mrs. Knox, beneath the national ensign, received congratulations before refreshments were served."

FROM A BASKET OF EARTH.

How Tradition Says the Caroline Group of Islands Were Formed.

Germany's purchase of the Caroline islands from Spain had already drawn public attention to this little known Pacific group, says Harper's Weekly, when a suggestion was made to America which is certainly entertaining, though hardly to be entertained. The king and head man of Kusaie, one of the easternmost of the Carolines, sent a petition to congress representing that, as they had been in intercourse with the American people for 47 years—that is, with American missionaries, traders and whalers—and had, both in this manner and otherwise, acquired a knowledge of our institutions, they wished to be annexed to the United States. It is assumed that the people who expressed this amiable preference did not know that they were about to be acquired by Germany.

The Caroline group includes, besides coral islands, five mountainous islands of basaltic formation, beautiful and fertile, with rivers and springs. To the north are the Ladrones islands, and to the west are the Philippines.

Among the many queer legends of these children of the Pacific there is none more highly improbable than their theory as to the origin of these islands and their inhabitants. They think they themselves were very strong in the water—in fact, they lived in it. The story goes that a woman and her children were floating around on the reef, when a man appeared from the west with a basket of soil on his shoulders. He had started out to make an island with a mountain on it. One of the children cried out to him: "Give us a little soil to make a place for our mother to rest, for she is very weak and cannot swim." He took out a handful of the earth and threw it down, making an island. As the man was going on his way over the water the son slyly made a hole in the basket, so as he proceeded on his way, he left a trail of land behind. Suddenly he became conscious that the basket seemed light, and looking around, he saw the land. In his anger he turned about and trod upon it, and thus the islands were formed.

Solons Who Get No Pay.

Only in Britain, Italy and Spain do M. P.'s serve their country free of charge. In Portugal the case is curious. Until 1852 Portuguese M. P.'s received ten shillings a day. This was then abolished. But the lawmakers still have free passes on all railways, and constituencies may pay their members a wage of not more than 14s 10d a day. As compared with his colleagues in other countries, then, we find that the British member of parliament enjoys but few privileges; nevertheless, his position is second to none in point of importance.—N. Y. Sun.

Education of Mme. Chrysanthemum.

The Japanese are truly making rapid strides in their march toward western culture. The latest innovation is the formation of commercial schools for the training of female clerks, and one of the largest railway companies in Nippon has intimated that after a certain date women only will be employed in the clerical department.—Hong-Kong Press.

ONE WOMAN'S WAY.

How She Got Her Bashful Admirer to Pop the Question.

At a married women's luncheon recently a sprightly young matron challenged each of the company to relate the way she became engaged. "As for myself," she continued, airily, "I will confess, to give you all courage, that I proposed to Jack—and I will be willing to wager that two-thirds of the women here, if they did not actually 'pop the question,' at least gave very timely and necessary help."

At this, relates the Chicago Chronicle, there was a storm of protest and much laughter, but when the proposition was made to "swear in" each narrator to tell the "whole truth and nothing but the truth" there was much conscious and blushing dissent. "Methinks you all protest too much!" said the first speaker. "I am sure that nearly every one of you are thinking this very minute of how you helped on your respective husbands at the crucial moment. Well, Mrs. Blank, am I not right?" she added, turning suddenly to her vis-a-vis across the table, whose expressive face showed inward appreciation of the charge. "How was it with you? I feel sure that you assisted your William—how did you do it?" And after a little urging and the promise from her neighbors to be equally frank Mrs. Blank began her confession.

"I knew that William really liked me," she began.

"Oh, of course, that goes without saying," laughed the self-constituted grand inquisitor.

"Otherwise I would never have dreamed of helping him," continued Mrs. Blank, with dignity, "but he was very slow! For months I waited, but he went on, sending me flowers and taking me to drive and devoting himself to me at dances without any result. You see, the poor fellow hadn't the courage to risk a refusal!" she explained, half defiantly—evidently rather repenting her confidences—but her listeners nodded understandingly, and she went on. "So I concluded I would first show him that there would be no risk, you understand. I thought and thought how to manage it, and finally an idea struck me. I wrote a supposed epistle to a girl I knew out west who had been my most intimate friend at school and of whom I had often spoken, and left a sheet from the letter in a book that I lent William to read. As I thought he might hesitate to read a private letter, I began the page with his name. I knew no man would resist that if he were in love and wanted to know what a girl thought of him. I wrote as if my friend had been teasing me about Mr. Blank, and, although I did not actually say I liked him, I said enough to make him feel pretty sure he could have me. Anyway, it answered. William wrote his proposal that very night, and after we were married I told him all about it!"

WOOLING IN SPAIN.

There Is Much of the Ancient Troubadour Style About It Still.

Horace Lee Washington, the United States consul at Valencia, Spain, has evidently been observing some things around him that do not strictly concern his official duties. On a recent visit to this country he describes a Spanish wooing in an interesting manner. "One of the first things that strikes an American in Spain," he says, "is the manner in which they treat their woman-kind, which is diametrically opposed to the American method. In no country I have been in, with the exception of Turkey, are the women so closely guarded and secluded as they are in Spain. Perhaps no better illustration of this characteristic could be given than the manner in which a courtship is carried on there, which is the same to-day that it was in the time of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. The young man gives outward and visible manifestation of his passion by standing under his loved one's window. As most families there live in apartment houses, the window in question may be five or six stories in the air. But under the window some five or more times a day the swain must take his stand. If the lady does not wish to discourage him she will occasionally appear at the window. On the other hand, if she is obdurate she does not appear, and finally he gives up his suit and ceases to haunt the street. Presuming, however, a case in which the course of true love does run smooth, after the suitor has stood about, so to speak, for two or three months, he is invited to the parental mansion in most formal fashion. At this visit the business of the marriage is disposed of. The prospective bride's dot is stated and the prospective bridegroom's resources are ascertained, and if on neither side an obstacle is presented the wedding shortly follows."

"A young woman never goes out by herself in Spain, but is always accompanied by her chaperon. If she dives out her chaperon invariably dines out with her. At the average dinner there are seldom more than four or five women present to a dozen men. The ranking men bank in female society, but the poor fellows whose rank is of lesser degree have to comfort each other at the far ends of the table."

Americans by the Year 2000.

There will probably be from 350,000,000 to 500,000,000 people in America and its possessions, by the lapse of another century. Nicaragua will ask for admission to our union after the completion of the great canal. Mexico will be next. Europe, seeking more territory to the south of us, will cause many South and Central American republics to be voted into the union by their own people.—Ladino Home Journal.



Was All Fixed.

One of the churches in a little western town is so fortunate as to have a young woman as its pastor. She was called to the door of the parsonage one day, and saw there a much-embarrassed young farmer of the German type.

"Dey said der minister lived in dis house," he said.

"Yes," said the fair pastor. "Well—m—I—I—want to kit merit!"

"To get married? Very well, I can marry you," said the minister, encouragingly.

"Oh, but I got a girl already," was the disconcerting reply.—Brooklyn Life.

In Doubt.

"After hearin' them summer boarders talk," said Farmer Cornstossel, "I don't quite know what it is that's ailin' me."

"I reckon it's the same old shakes, ain't it?" answered his wife. "I don't see the name makes much difference." "Mandy, they's distinctions that you don't understand. If it's plain fever'n-aiger, all I want to do is to git some quinine. But if it's malaria fever I've got to send clear to town an' git some kee-neen."—Washington Star.

A Soft Answer.

The very superior saleslady had studiously ignored the efforts of the shopping person to attract her attention. Finally, however, she condescended to ask:

"Is anyone waiting on you?" "I'm afraid not," replied the shopping person, sweetly; "my husband was—I left him outside—but I'm afraid he's become disgusted and gone home."—Philadelphia Press.

The Grateful Lover.

In church I'm grateful through and through. That Cecilia sits full in my view; Her picture hat and lovely face Adorn my day with generous grace.—Detroit Free Press.

GENEROUS OFFER.



The Ten-Year-Old-Papa promises me 50 cents if I get on the roll of merit. Put me there, sir, and I will give you 25 cents.—Le Rire.

Eggs and Eggs.

First Actor—It was a case of Greek meeting Greek last night. Second Actor—How was that? "You know what a bad egg our comedian is?"

"Yes."

"Well, he was struck by another just as bad."—Brooklyn Life.

The Impossible.

"He is awfully nice," she sobbed, "but I can't—I can't."

"Can't what?" queries her mother. "Give up my name of Willoughby for his of Snobkins," was the tearful answer.—Tit-Bits.

Able Financiering.

Grocer—Well, little one, what can I do for you?

Jenny—Please, sir, mamma says will you change a dollar for her and she'll give you the dollar to-morrow.—N. Y. World.

The Fleckle Fair.

Cobwigger—Howell says the women read books while the men read the papers.

Merritt—That accounts for the fact that the popular novel changes as often as the fashions.—Judge.

Too Talkative.

Willie—Just one more question, pa. Our Sunday school teacher says I'm made of dust. Am I?

Pa—I guess not. If you were you'd dry up once in awhile.—Philadelphia Press.

The Why and Wherefore.

Peter—Why should the anchor be the symbol of hope?

Patrice—Well, I suppose it is because when a girl tells a man there is hope she expects to anchor him.—Yonkers Statesman.

One Thing Needed.

Neil—Now that you have a new engagement ring, of course you are perfectly happy.

Bess—No, not quite; I haven't found out what it cost yet.—Chicago Daily News.

Had It.

Sillicus—I was awfully downhearted before I got engaged. I married for sympathy.

Cynicus—Well, you've got mine.—Philadelphia Record.

Exceptions.

"I know it is said," averred Uncle Allen Sparks, "that every family has a black sheep, but sometimes it isn't a black sheep at all—it's an old goat."—Chicago Tribune.

Looked That Way.

Jaggles—Do you really think he committed suicide?

Waggles—Well, he ate mushrooms he gathered himself.—Judge.

Profoundly Impressed. "There's no use o' talkin'," said Bronco Bob, "this eastern education is splendid."

"Have you visited any of our public schools?" "Yes, and they are fine. That scheme of havin' all the children hold up their hands every time the teacher speaks to 'em is great. It gives 'em practical trainin' for the real battle of life, in which knowin' when to throw up both hands an' doin' it in a hurry may mean so much."—Washington Star.

Winning a Reputation. He wouldn't run in debt, And so the people said it Was for the reason that No man would give him credit.—Chicago Times-Herald.

ONE ON HIS PAPA.



Teacher—You will have to bring me an excuse for your absence yesterday from your father.

Willie—Aw! he ain't no good on excuses; ma catches him every time.—Washington Star.

Two of a Kind.

"They say the barber looks like me," said Mr. Newellwedded. "The only likeness I can see is that we're both baldheaded."—Philadelphia Press.

Liable to Seizure.

"This," said the freight handler, "is a box of feathers."

"What kind of feathers?" inquired the agent.

"Tail feathers of roosters. Shipped from New York millinery concern out here."

"Well, just put down one box of Manhattan cocktails."—Chicago Daily News.

The Qualifying Clause.

"I heard some very complimentary things about you," said the man who likes to be disagreeable.

"Indeed!" returned Senator Sorghum, with complacent glee.

"Yes. But the man who said them wound up with the remark that he believed in giving 'the devil his due.'"—Washington Star.

The Hat Was Removed.

"Madam," complained the man behind the hat, "I can't see the stage; if you'd kindly remove—"

"Oh," snarped the lady. "I guess you're seeing your money's worth."

"You're right," he replied. "I only paid \$1.50, but here I can see the price tag of your hat, and it's marked \$3.98."—Philadelphia Press.

He Was Sadly Overrated.

"That city man that was visiting me is an overrated cuss," remarked the farmer.

"How so?" "Oh, the papers all said he was a great hand at watering stock, but I found he couldn't work the pump five minutes without laming his arm."—Chicago Post.

Not a Shining Light.

"My son, I'm very sad to say," The aged father said, "You're not reflecting credit, sir, Upon my hoary head."

"Alas, it's true!" the son replied; "But what can you expect, Since I have worn my credit out, And have none to reflect?"—Town Topics.

FAMILY SKELETON.



"I suppose you'll be telling people that I'm a fool."

"No, dear. There are some things we must keep to ourselves."—Chicago Daily News.

At Last.

There's trouble at the boarding house. There's blood upon the moon. The bold, bad, base monopolists Have cornered the festive prune!—Chicago Tribune.

A Timely Innovation.

Jack (at club window)—There goes Jenkins with his auto, and I'll be bowled if he hasn't a tiger up behind. George—Tiger nothing! That's the repair man.—Brooklyn Life.

A Pocket He Often Used.

Benham—I'm afraid I'll forget to mail your letters.

Mrs. Benham—I don't believe you will; I put it in the pocket where you carry your cigar case.—Brooklyn Life.

Uncle Allen.

"Everything is run by combinations now," said Uncle Allen Sparks, "except the churches. They don't seem to get together any better than they used to."—Chicago Tribune.